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The Joliet-Marquette Expedition

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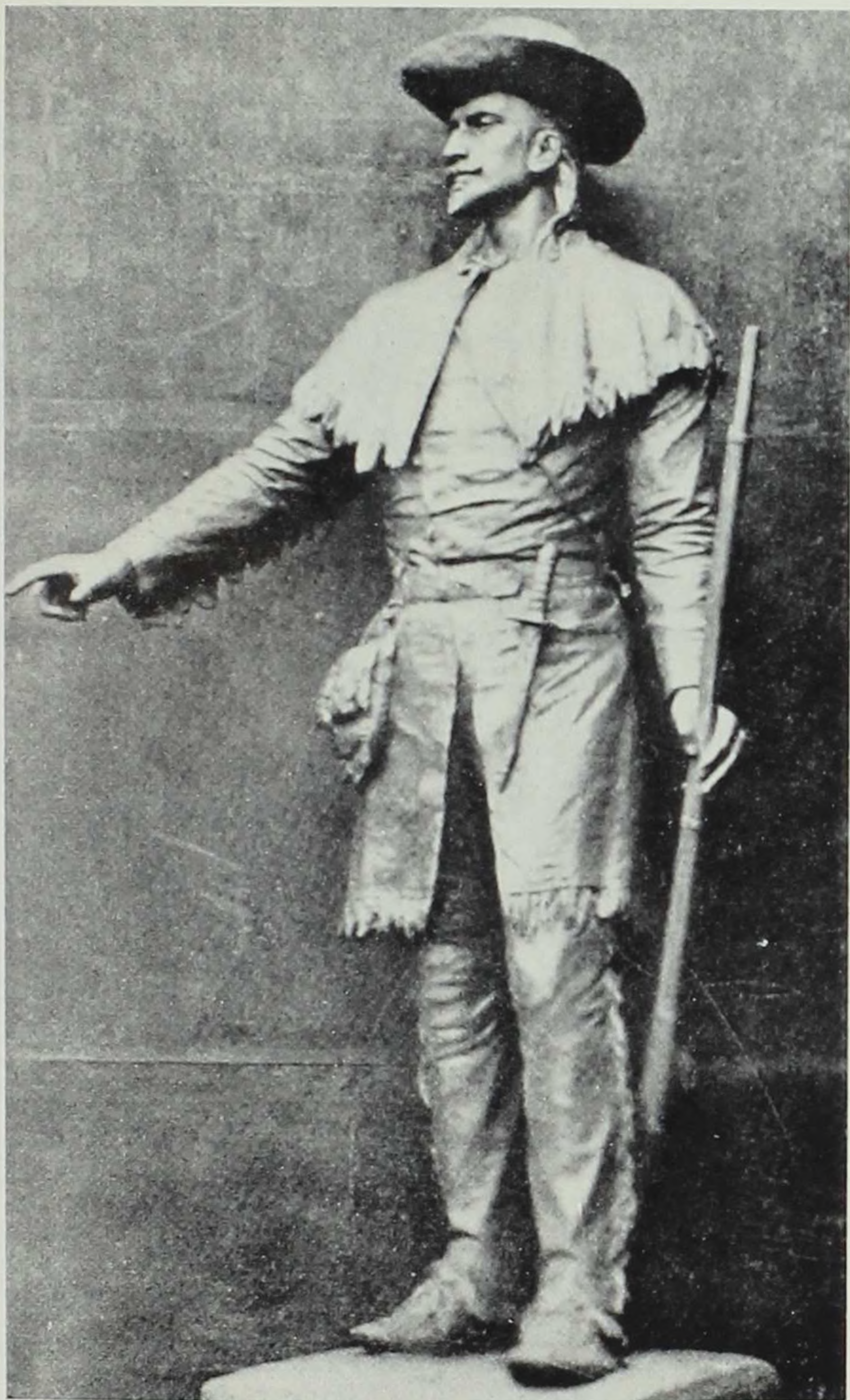
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The Joliet-Marquette Expedition

The Joliet-Marquette expedition is a significant episode in Iowa history, for the first recorded history of eastern Iowa begins with the advent of these two intrepid explorers. The exact date of birth of Joliet, the leader of the expedition, is uncertain, but he was baptized at Quebec in 1645, studied in the Jesuit College at Quebec, and was mentioned as a clerk of the church in 1666-1667. Joliet gave up church life in 1667, returned to France for a year, and upon his return was sent to search for copper mines on Lake Superior in 1669. Two years later, in 1671, he was with St. Luson when that colorful Frenchman took possession of all the land drained by the Great Lakes.

In 1672, the Governor of New France sent Louis Joliet to make certain that the Great River of the West flowed into the Gulf of California in order that a passage could be opened to the Indies. Joliet was a natural rover — intelligent, experienced, and faithful. As a boy of thirteen he had drawn a map of the Gulf of St. Lawrence that had been placed in the navy office in Paris. He set out alone from Montreal in the fall of 1672 and reached the little mission of St. Ignace on the Straits of Mackinac that December. There Father



Joliet Public Library Photo

Statue of Louis Joliet at Joliet, Illinois

Jacques Marquette, a young Jesuit priest, joined him on his great adventure.

Marquette had received his instructions from Dablon, his superior, to accompany Joliet and extend the gospel among the Indians. Born in Laon, France, in 1637, Marquette entered the Jesuit service in 1654, studied and taught in France from 1654-1666, arriving in Quebec in the latter year. After studying Indian languages at Three Rivers from 1666 to 1668, he was sent to the Ottawa Mission at Sault Sainte Marie. He replaced Al-louez at La Pointe in 1669 and went to St. Ignace on the Straits of Mackinac in 1671. It was while at these remote posts (before the arrival of Joliet) that Marquette received invitations from the Illinois and other Indians to bring the gospel to them.

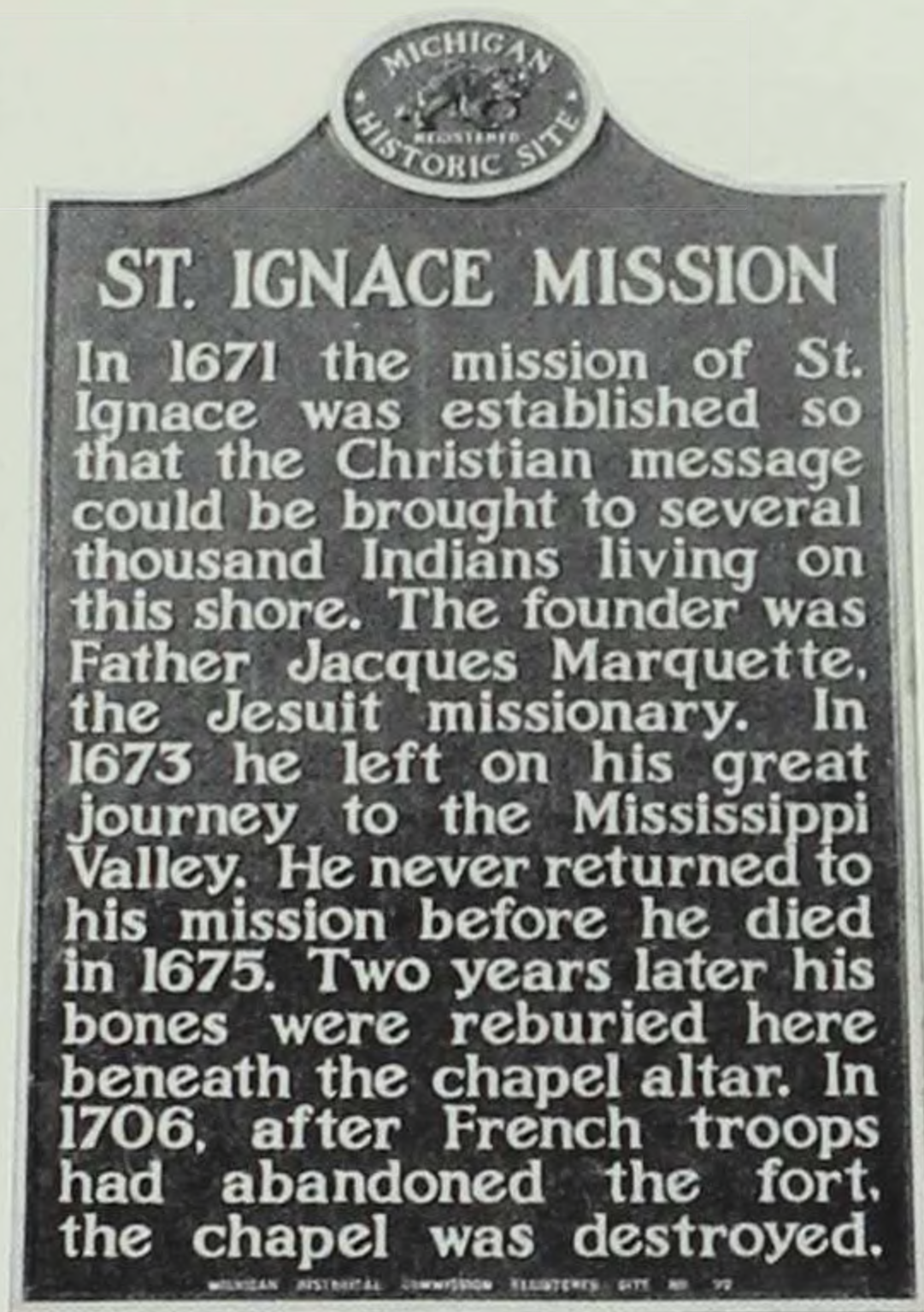
After a winter of careful preparation, Joliet and Marquette left St. Ignace on May 17, 1673. The expedition, consisting of Joliet and Marquette and five white companions, paddled silently along the north shore of Lake Michigan and into Green Bay. Only two canoes were needed and their provisions consisted of Indian corn and smoked meat. The French first visited the Menomonie or "wild-rice" Indians who dwelt along the lower reaches of Green Bay. The Menomonie tried to dissuade Joliet and Marquette from their hazardous voyage.

They represented to me that I would meet Nations who never show mercy to Strangers, but Break Their heads without any cause; and that war was kindled Between

Various peoples who dwelt upon our Route, which Exposed us to the further manifest danger of being killed by the bands of Warriors who are ever in the Field. They also said that the great River was very dangerous, when one does not know the difficult Places; that it was full of horrible monsters, which devoured men and Canoes To-



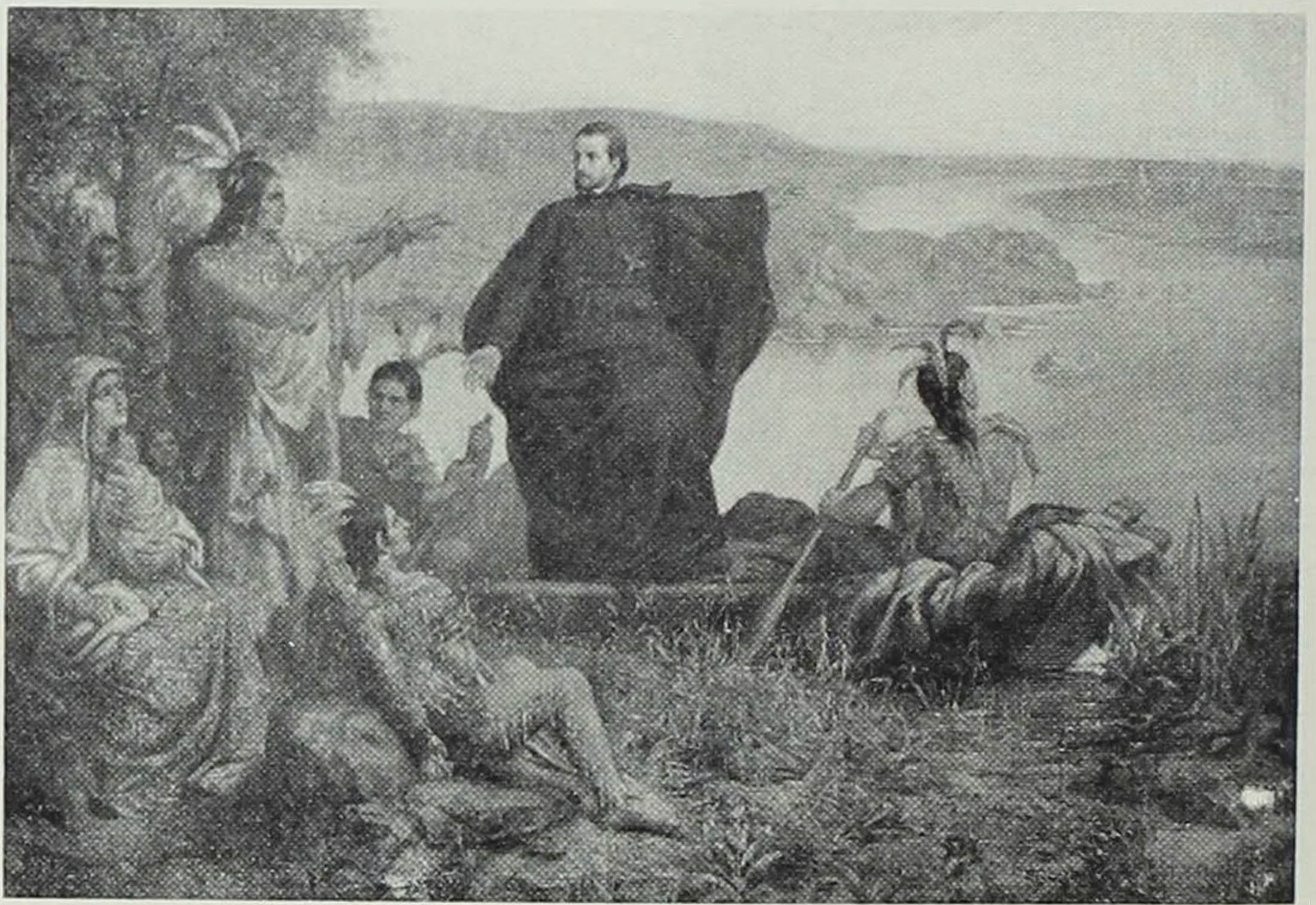
A Retouched Copy of a Reputed Portrait
Father Jacques Marquette



gether; that there was even a demon, who was heard from a great distance, who barred the way, and swallowed up all who ventured to approach him; Finally that the Heat was so excessive In those countries that it would Inevitably cause Our death.

Leaving Green Bay the seven French voyageurs began their ascent of the rocky Fox River

to the village of the Machkoutens [Mascoutens] or the "Fire Nation" which marked the "limits of the discoveries" which the French had made. They found three tribes in this area — Miami, Mascouten, and Kickapoo. Joliet, after addressing the elders and telling the purpose of the ex-



FATHER JACQUES MARQUETTE

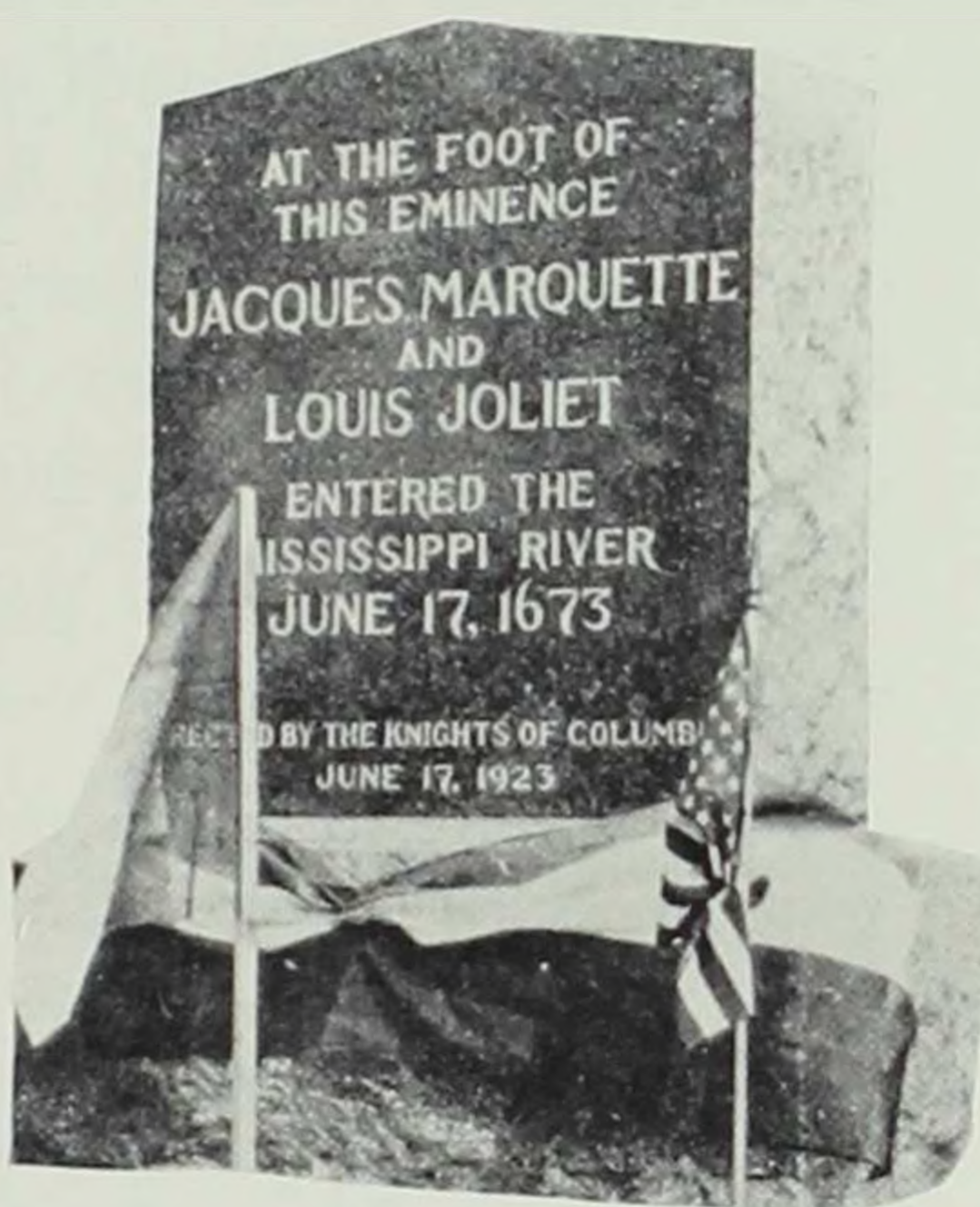
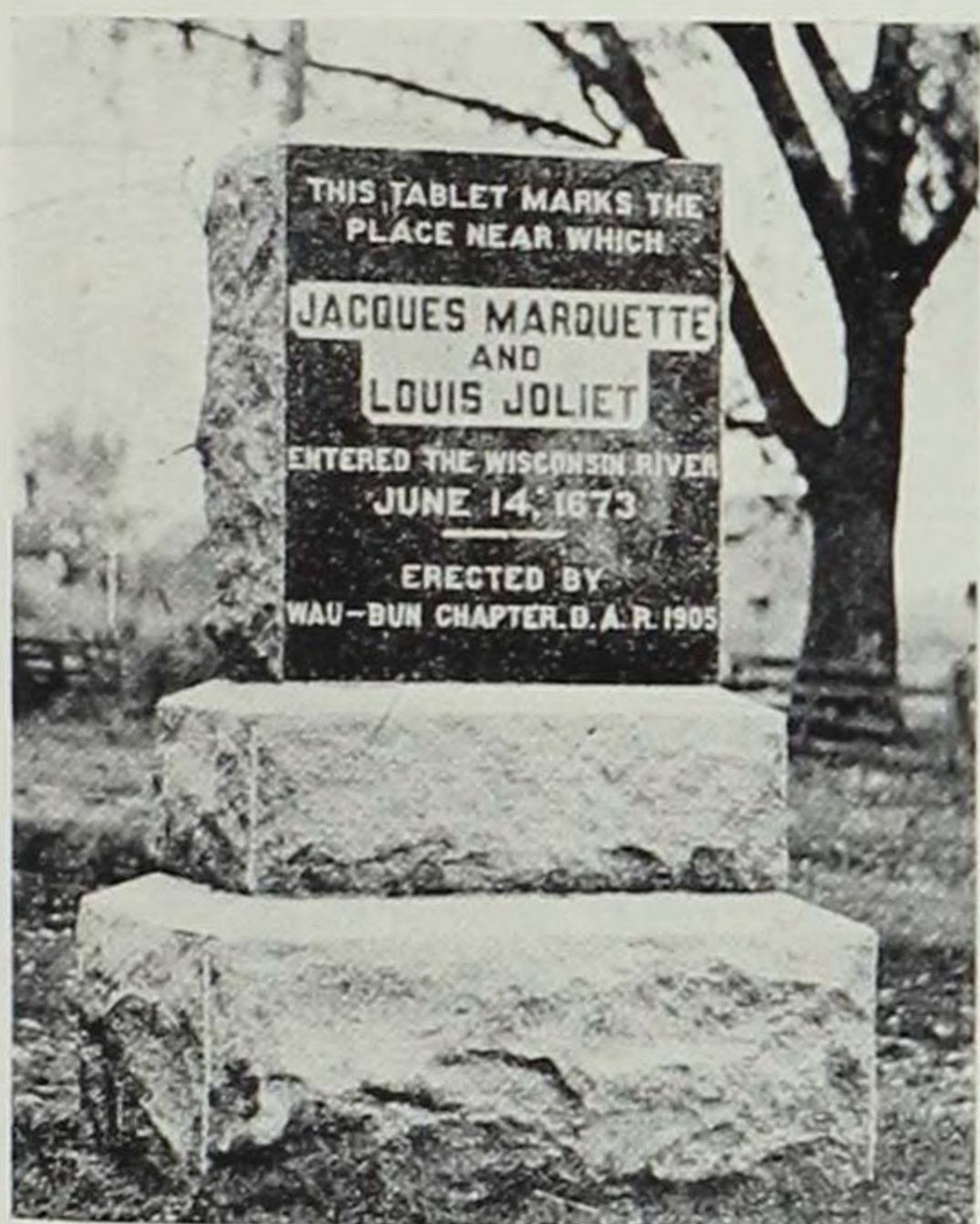
Marquette's missionary activity among the Indians at St. Ignace

pedition, secured two Miami Indians to guide them to the portage between the Fox and Wisconsin [Portage, Wisconsin]. The guides helped Joliet and Marquette across the portage and then returned home "leaving us alone in this Unknown country, in the hand of providence."

The approach to Iowa by way of the Wiscon-

sin River was made in one week and apparently with no mishap.

The River on which we embarked is called Meskousing. It is very wide; it has a sandy bottom, which forms various shoals that render its navigation very difficult. It is full of Islands Covered with Vines. On the banks one sees fertile land, diversified with woods, prairies, and Hills. There are oak, Walnut, and basswood trees; and another



Photos Courtesy Wisconsin Historical Society

Markers commemorating Joliet-Marquette Expedition at Portage, Wisconsin, and at the mouth of the Wisconsin River

kind, whose branches are armed with long thorns. We saw there neither feathered game nor fish, but many deer, and a large number of cattle. Our Route lay to the southwest, and, after navigating about 30 leagues, we saw a spot presenting all the appearances of an iron mine; and, in fact, one of our party who had formerly seen such mines, assures us that The One which We found is very

good and very rich. It is Covered with three feet of good soil, and is quite near a chain of rocks, the base of which is covered by very fine trees. After proceeding 40 leagues on This same route, we arrived at the mouth of our River; and, at 42 and a half degrees Of latitude, We safely entered Missisipi on The 17th of June, with a Joy that I cannot Express.

It must have been a thrilling moment in the lives of Joliet and Marquette as their tiny canoes glided out of the mouth of the Wisconsin and into the broad and swiftly flowing Mississippi — the mighty waterway around which the French had been building legends for over a century. No white man had ever ventured this far beyond the Great Lakes. Little wonder Marquette should exclaim:

Here we are, then, on this so renowned River, all of whose peculiar features I have endeavored to note carefully. The Missisipi River takes its rise in various lakes in the country of the Northern nations. It is narrow at the place where Miskous empties; its Current, which flows southward, is slow and gentle. To the right is a large Chain of very high Mountains, and to the left are beautiful lands; in various Places, the stream is Divided by Islands. On sounding, we found ten brasses of Water. Its Width is very unequal; sometimes it is three-quarters of a league, and sometimes it narrows to three arpents. We gently followed its Course, which runs toward the south and southeast, as far as the 42nd degree of Latitude. Here we plainly saw that its aspect was completely changed. There are hardly any woods or mountains; The Islands are more beautiful, and are Covered with finer

trees. We saw only deer and cattle, bustards, and Swans without wings, because they drop Their plumage in This country. From time to time, we came upon monstrous fish, one of which struck our Canoe with such violence that I Thought that it was a great tree, about to break the Canoe to pieces. On another occasion, we saw on The water a monster with the head of a tiger, a sharp nose Like That of a wildcat, with whiskers and straight, Erect ears; The head was gray and The Neck quite black; but We saw no more creatures of this sort. When we cast our nets into the water we caught Sturgeon, and a very extraordinary Kind of fish. It resembles the trout, with This difference, that its mouth is larger. Near its nose — which is smaller, as are also the eyes — is a large Bone shaped Like a woman's busk, three fingers wide and a Cubit Long, at the end of which is a disk as Wide As one's hand. This frequently causes it to fall backward when it leaps out of the water. When we reached the parallel of 41 degrees 28 minutes, following The same direction, we found that Turkeys had taken the place of game; and the pisikious, or wild cattle, That of the other animals.

This description of the American bison, or buffalo, is one of the earliest and most graphic recorded by the French.

We call them "wild cattle," because they are very similar to our domestic cattle. They are not longer, but are nearly as large again, and more Corpulent. When Our people killed one, three persons had much difficulty in moving it. The head is very large; The forehead is flat, and a foot and a half Wide between the Horns, which are exactly like Those of our oxen, but black and much larger. Under the Neck They have a Sort of large dewlap, which

hangs down; and on The back is a rather high hump. The whole of the head, The Neck, and a portion of the Shoulders, are Covered with a thick Mane Like That of horses; It forms a crest a foot long, which makes them hideous, and, falling over their eyes, Prevents them from seeing what is before Them. The remainder of the Body is covered with a heavy coat of curly hair, almost Like That of our sheep, but much stronger and Thicker. It falls off in Summer, and The skin becomes as soft As Velvet. At that season, the savages Use the hides for making fine Robes, which they paint in various Colors. The flesh and the fat of the pisikious are Excellent, and constitute the best dish at feasts. Moreover, they are very fierce; and not a year passes without their killing some savages. When attacked, they catch a man on their Horns, if they can, toss Him in the air, and then throw him on the ground, after which they trample him under foot, and kill him. If a person fire at Them from a distance, with either a bow or a gun, he must, immediately after the Shot, throw himself down and hide in the grass; For if they perceive Him who has fired, they Run at him, and attack him. As their legs are thick and rather Short, they do not run very fast, As a rule, except when angry. They are scattered about the prairie in herds; I have seen one of 400.

Although they had refused to be deterred by the warnings of the Menomonie, the seven Frenchmen remained ever on the alert lest they be attacked by hostile Indians.

We continued to advance, but, As we knew not whither we were going, — for we had proceeded over one Hundred leagues without discovering anything except animals and birds, — we kept well on our guard. On this account, we make only a small fire on land, toward eve-

ning, to cook our meals; and, after supper, we remove Ourselves as far from it as possible, and pass the night in our Canoes, which we anchor in the river at some distance from the shore. This does not prevent us from always posting one of the party as a sentinel, for fear of a surprise. Proceeding still in a southerly and south-southwesterly direction, we find ourselves at the parallel of 41 degrees, and as low as 40 degrees and some minutes, — partly southeast and partly southwest, — after having advanced over 60 leagues since We Entered the River, without discovering anything.

After proceeding for almost two hundred miles past what is now Guttenberg, Dubuque, Bellevue, Clinton, Davenport, and Muscatine, they finally approached the mouth of the Iowa River. No mention was made of the lead mines, where Nicholas Perrot was to go seventeen years later at the invitation of the Miami Indians to teach them how to mine lead. Apparently the Rock Island or Upper Rapids presented no problems to them as they skimmed down the river between what is now Le-Claire and Davenport. Not a solitary Indian was seen during the eight long days they paddled along the eastern border of Iowa. Nothing but a solemn stillness pervaded the vast reaches of river as they threaded their way through the maze of islands that interlaced the Mississippi.

Finally, on the 25th of June, we perceived on the water's edge some tracks of men, and a narrow and somewhat beaten path leading to a fine prairie. We stopped to Examine it; and, thinking that it was a road which Led to

some village of savages, We resolved to go and reconnoiter it. We therefore left our two Canoes under the guard of our people, strictly charging Them not to allow themselves to be surprised, after which Monsieur Jolliet and I undertook this investigation — a rather hazardous



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The Illinois Indians greet Joliet and Marquette in Iowa

one for two men who exposed themselves, alone, to the mercy of a barbarous and Unknown people. We silently followed The narrow path, and, after walking About 2 leagues, We discovered a village on the bank of a river, and two others on a Hill distant about half a league from the first. Then we Heartily commended ourselves to God, and, after imploring his aid, we went farther without being perceived, and approached so near that we could even hear the savages talking. We therefore Decided that it was time to reveal ourselves. This We did by Shouting with all Our energy, and stopped, without advancing any farther. On hearing the shout, the savages quickly issued

from their Cabins, And having probably recognized us as frenchmen, especially when they saw a black gown, — or, at least, having no cause for distrust, as we were only two men, and had given them notice of our arrival, — they deputed four old men to come and speak to us. Two of these bore tobacco-pipes, finely ornamented and Adorned with various feathers. They walked slowly, and raised their pipes toward the sun, seemingly offering them to it to smoke, — without, however, saying a word. They spent a rather long time in covering the short distance between their village and us. Finally, when they had drawn near, they stopped to Consider us attentively. I was reassured when I observed these Ceremonies, which with them are performed only among friends; and much more so when I saw them Clad in Cloth, for I judged thereby that they were our allies. I therefore spoke to them first, and asked them who they were. They replied that they were Illinois; and, as a token of peace, they offered us their pipes to smoke. They afterward invited us to enter their Village, where all the people impatiently awaited us. These pipes for smoking tobacco are called in This country Calumets. This word has come so much Into use that, in order to be understood, I shall be obliged to use it, as I shall often have to mention these pipes.

At the Door of the Cabin in which we were to be received was an old man, who awaited us in a rather surprising attitude, which constitutes a part of the Ceremonial that they observe when they receive Strangers. This man stood erect, and stark naked, with his hands extended and lifted toward the sun, As if he wished to protect himself from its rays, which nevertheless shone upon his face through his fingers. When we came near him, he paid us This Compliment: "How beautiful the sun is, O frenchman, when thou comest to visit us! All our village awaits thee, and thou shalt enter all our Cabins in peace." Hav-

ing said this, he made us enter his own, in which were a crowd of people; they devoured us with their eyes, but, nevertheless, observed profound silence. We could, however, hear these words, which were addressed to us from time to time in a low voice: "How good it is, My brothers, that you should visit us."

After We had taken our places, the usual Civility of the country was paid to us, which consisted in offering us the Calumet. This must not be refused, unless one wishes to be considered an Enemy, or at least uncivil; it suffices that one make a pretense of smoking. While all the elders smoked after Us, in order to do us honor, we received an invitation on behalf of the great Captain of all the Illinois to proceed to his Village where he wished to hold a Council with us. We went thither in a large Company, For all these people, who had never seen any frenchmen among Them, could not cease looking at us. They Lay on The grass along the road; they preceded us, and then retraced their steps to come and see us Again. All this was done noiselessly, and with marks of great respect for us.

When we reached the Village of the great Captain, We saw him at the entrance of his Cabin, between two old men, — all three erect and naked, and holding their Calumet turned toward the sun. He harangued us In a few words, congratulating us upon our arrival. He afterward offered us his Calumet, and made us smoke while we entered his Cabin, where we received all their usual kind Attentions.

Seeing all assembled and silent, I spoke to them by four presents that I gave them. By the first, I told them that we were journeying peacefully to visit the nations dwelling on the River as far as the Sea. By the second, I announced to them that God, who had Created them, had pity on Them, inasmuch as, after they had so long been ignorant

of him, he wished to make himself Known to all the peoples; that I was Sent by him for that purpose; and that it was for Them to acknowledge and obey him. By the third, I said that the great Captain of the French informed them that he it was who restored peace everywhere; and that he had subdued The Iroquois. Finally, by the fourth, we begged them to give us all The Information that they had about the Sea, and about the Nations through Whom we must pass to reach it.

When I had finished my speech, the Captain arose, and, resting His hand upon the head of a little Slave whom he wished to give us, he spoke thus: "I thank thee, Black Gown, and thee, O frenchman," — addressing himself to Monsieur Jolliet, — "for having taken so much trouble to come to visit us. Never has the earth been so beautiful, or the sun so Bright, as to-day; Never has our river been so Calm, or so clear of rocks, which your canoes have Removed in passing; never has our tobacco tasted so good, or our corn appeared so fine, as We now see Them. Here is my son, whom I give thee to Show thee my Heart. I beg thee to have pity on me, and on all my Nation. It is thou who Knowest the great Spirit who has made us all. It is thou who speakest to Him, and who hearest his word. Beg Him to give me life and health, and to come and dwell with us, in order to make us Know him." Having said this, he placed the little Slave near us, and gave us a second present, consisting of an altogether mysterious Calumet, upon which they place more value than upon a Slave. By this gift, he expressed to us The esteem that he had for Monsieur Our Governor, from the account which we had given of him; and, by a third, he begged us on behalf of all his Nation not to go farther, on account of the great dangers to which we Exposed ourselves.

I replied that I Feared not death, and that I regarded no happiness as greater than that of losing my life for the

glory of Him who has made all. This is what these poor people cannot Understand.

The Council was followed by a great feast, Consisting of four dishes, which had to be partaken of in accordance with all their fashions. The first course was a great wooden platter full of sagamité, — that is to say, meal of indian corn boiled in water, and seasoned with fat. The Master of Ceremonies filled a Spoon with sagamité three or 4 times, and put it to my mouth As if I were a little Child. He did The same to Monsieur Jollyet. As a second course, he caused a second platter to be brought, on which were three fish. He took some pieces of them, removed the bones therefrom, and, after blowing upon them to cool Them, he put them in our mouths As one would give food to a bird. For the third course, they brought a large dog, that had just been killed; but, when they learned that we did not eat this meat, they removed it from before us. Finally, the 4th course was a piece of wild ox, The fattest morsels of which were placed in our mouths.

After this feast, we had to go to visit the whole village, which Consists of fully 300 Cabins. While we walked through the Streets, an orator Continually harangued to oblige all the people to come to see us without Annoying us. Everywhere we were presented with Belts, garters, and other articles made of the hair of bears and cattle, dyed red, Yellow, and gray. These are all the rarities they possess. As they are of no great Value, we did not burden ourselves with Them.

We Slept in the Captain's Cabin, and on the following day we took Leave of him, promising to pass again by his village, within four moons. He Conducted us to our Canoes, with nearly 600 persons who witnessed our Embarkation, giving us every possible manifestation of the joy that Our visit had caused them. For my own part, I promised, on bidding them Adieu, that I would come

the following year, and reside with Them to instruct them. But, before quitting the Illinois country, it is proper that I should relate what I observed of their Customs and usages.

When one speaks the word "Illinois," it is as if one said in their language, "the men," — As if the other Savages were looked upon by them merely as animals. It must also be admitted that they have an air of humanity which we have not observed in the other nations that we have seen upon our route. The shortness Of my stay among Them did not allow me to secure all the Information that I would have desired; among all Their customs, the following is what I have observed.

They are divided into many villages, some of which are quite distant from that of which we speak, which is called peouarea. This causes some difference in their language, which, on the whole, resembles allegonquin, so that we easily understood each other. They are of a gentle and tractable disposition; we Experienced this in the reception which they gave us. They have several wives, of whom they are Extremely jealous; they watch them very closely, and Cut off Their noses or ears when they misbehave. I saw several women who bore the marks of their misconduct. Their Bodies are shapely; they are active and very skillful with bows and arrows. They also use guns, which they buy from our savage allies who Trade with our french. They use them especially to inspire, through their noise and smoke, terror in their Enemies; the latter do not use guns, and have never seen any, since they live too Far toward the West. They are warlike, and make themselves dreaded by the Distant tribes to the south and west, whither they go to procure Slaves; these they barter, selling them at a high price to other Nations, in exchange for other Wares. Those very Distant Savages against whom they war have no Knowledge of Europeans; neither do

they know anything of iron, or of Copper, and they have only stone Knives. When the Illinois depart to go to war, the whole village must be notified by a loud Shout, which is uttered at the doors of their Cabins, the night and The Morning before their departure. The Captains are distinguished from the warriors by wearing red Scarfs. These are made, with considerable Skill, from the Hair of bears and wild cattle. They paint their faces with red ocher, great quantities of which are found at a distance of some days' journey from the village. They live by hunting, game being plentiful in that country, and on indian corn, of which they always have a good crop; consequently, they have never suffered from famine. They also sow beans and melons, which are Excellent, especially those that have red seeds. Their Squashes are not of the best; they dry them in the sun, to eat them during The winter and the spring. Their Cabins are very large, and are Roofed and floored with mats made of Rushes. They make all Their utensils of wood, and Their Ladles out of the heads of cattle, whose Skulls They know so well how to prepare that they use these ladles with ease for eating their sagamité.

They are liberal in cases of illness, and Think that the effect of the medicines administered to them is in proportion to the presents given to the physician. Their garments consist only of skins; the women are always clad very modestly and very becomingly, while the men do not take the trouble to Cover themselves. I know not through what superstition some Illinois, as well as some Nadouessi, while still young, assume the garb of women, and retain it throughout their lives. There is some mystery in this, For they never marry and glory in demeaning themselves to do everything that the women do. They go to war, however, but can use only clubs, and not bows and arrows, which are the weapons proper to men. They are present

at all the juggleries, and at the solemn dances in honor of the Calumet; at these they sing, but must not dance. They are summoned to the Councils, and nothing can be decided without their advice. Finally, through their profession of leading an Extraordinary life, they pass for Manitous, — That is to say, for Spirits, — or persons of Consequence.

There remains no more, except to speak of the Calumet. There is nothing more mysterious or more respected among them. Less honor is paid to the Crowns and scepters of Kings than the Savages bestow upon this. It seems to be the God of peace and of war, the Arbiter of life and of death. It has but to be carried upon one's person, and displayed, to enable one to walk safely through the midst of Enemies — who, in the hottest of the Fight, lay down Their arms when it is shown. For That reason, the Illinois gave me one, to serve as a safeguard among all the Nations through whom I had to pass during my voyage. There is a Calumet for peace, and one for war, which are distinguished solely by the Color of the feathers with which they are adorned; Red is a sign of war. They also use it to put an end to Their disputes, to strengthen Their alliances, and to speak to Strangers. It is fashioned from a red stone, polished like marble, and bored in such a manner that one end serves as a receptacle for the tobacco, while the other fits into the stem; this is a stick two feet long, as thick as an ordinary cane, and bored through the middle. It is ornamented with the heads and necks of various birds, whose plumage is very beautiful. To these they also add large feathers, — red, green, and other colors, — wherewith the whole is adorned. They have a great regard for it, because they look upon it as the calumet of the Sun; and, in fact, they offer it to the latter to smoke when they wish to obtain a calm, or rain, or fine weather. They scruple to bathe themselves at the begin-

ning of Summer, or to eat fresh fruit, until after they have performed the dance, which they do as follows:

The Calumet dance, which is very famous among these peoples, is performed solely for important reasons; sometimes to strengthen peace, or to unite themselves for some great war; at other times, for public rejoicing. Sometimes they thus do honor to a Nation who are invited to be present; sometimes it is danced at the reception of some important personage, as if they wished to give him the diversion of a Ball or a Comedy. In Winter, the ceremony takes place in a Cabin; in Summer, in the open fields. When the spot is selected, it is completely surrounded by trees, so that all may sit in the shade afforded by their leaves, in order to be protected from the heat of the Sun. A large mat of rushes, painted in various colors, is spread in the middle of the place, and serves as a carpet upon which to place with honor the God of the person who gives the Dance; for each has his own god, which they call their Manitou. This is a serpent, a bird, or other similar thing, of which they have dreamed while sleeping, and in which they place all their confidence for the success of their war, their fishing, and their hunting. Near this Manitou, and at its right, is placed the Calumet in honor of which the feast is given; and all around it a sort of trophy is made, and the weapons used by the warriors of those Nations are spread, namely: clubs, war-hatchets, bows, quivers, and arrows.

Everything being thus arranged, and the hour of the Dance drawing near, those who have been appointed to sing take the most honorable place under the branches; these are the men and women who are gifted with the best voices, and who sing together in perfect harmony. Afterward, all come to take their seats in a circle under the branches; but each one, on arriving, must salute the Manitou. This he does by inhaling the smoke, and blowing it

from his mouth upon the Manitou, as if he were offering to it incense. Every one, at the outset, takes the Calumet in a respectful manner, and, supporting it with both hands, causes it to dance in cadence, keeping good time with the air of the songs. He makes it execute many differing figures; sometimes he shows it to the whole assembly, turning himself from one side to the other. After that, he who is to begin the Dance appears in the middle of the assembly, and at once continues this. Sometimes he offers it to the sun, as if he wished the latter to smoke it; sometimes he inclines it toward the earth; again, he makes it spread its wings, as if about to fly; at other times, he puts it near the mouths of those present, that they may smoke. The whole is done in cadence; and this is, as it were, the first Scene of the Ballet.

The second consists of a Combat carried on to the sound of a kind of drum, which succeeds the songs, or even unites with them, harmonizing very well together. The Dancer makes a sign to some warrior to come to take the arms which lie upon the mat, and invites him to fight to the sound of the drums. The latter approaches, takes up the bow and arrows, and the war-hatchet, and begins the duel with the other, whose sole defense is the Calumet. This spectacle is very pleasing, especially as all is done in cadence; for one attacks, the other defends himself; one strikes blows, the other parries them; one takes to flight, the other pursues; and then he who was fleeing faces about, and causes his adversary to flee. This is done so well — with slow and measured steps, and to the rhythmic sound of the voices and drums — that it might pass for a very fine opening of a Ballet in France. The third Scene consists of a lofty Discourse, delivered by him who holds the Calumet; for, when the Combat is ended without bloodshed, he recounts the battles at which he has been present, the victories that he has won, the names of the Nations,

the places, and the Captives whom he has made. And, to reward him, he who presides at the Dance makes him a present of a fine robe of Beaver-skins, or some other article. Then, having received it, he hands the Calumet to another, the latter to a third, and so on with all the others, until every one has done his duty; then the President presents the Calumet itself to the Nation that has been invited to the Ceremony, as a token of the everlasting peace that is to exist between the two peoples.

Here is one of the Songs that they are in the habit of singing. They give it a certain turn which cannot be sufficiently expressed by Note, but which nevertheless constitutes all its grace.

Ninahani, ninahani, ninahani, nani ongo.

Joliet and Marquette left the Illinois Indians at three o'clock in the afternoon at the end of June. The Illinois gathered along the banks of the Mississippi to bid them farewell. Their stop in Iowa was the longest made in their exploration, fully fifteen of the thirty-seven printed pages of their narrative in the *Jesuit Relations* being devoted to Iowa. Their journey downstream was uneventful until they approached the present site of Alton, Illinois, where Piasa State Park commemorates the presence of the legendary Piasa bird. The first description of this strange monster by the white man was made by Joliet and Marquette:

While Skirting some rocks, which by Their height and Length inspired awe, We saw upon one of them two painted monsters which at first made Us afraid, and upon Which the boldest savages dare not Long rest their eyes. They are as large As a calf; they have Horns on their

heads Like those of deer, a horrible look, red eyes, a beard
Like a tiger's, a face somewhat like a man's, a body Cov-
ered with scales, and so Long A tail that it winds all
around the Body, passing above the head and going back
between the legs, ending in a Fish's tail. Green, red, and
black are the three Colors composing the Picture. More-
over, these 2 monsters are so well painted that we cannot



From Henry Lewis, *Das Illustrierte Mississippithal*
Painting on Piasa Rock above Alton, Illinois

believe that any savage is their author; for good painters
in france would find it difficult to paint so well, — and,
besides, they are so high up on the rock that it is difficult
to reach that place Conveniently to paint them.

No sooner had they passed the Piasa bluff than
another and more dangerous situation confronted

them as they "heard the noise of a rapid, into which we were about to run." The tawny, bank-caving Missouri had come into view. As Marquette records:

I have seen nothing more dreadful. An accumulation of large and entire trees, branches, and floating islands, was issuing from The mouth of The river pekistanoui, with such impetuosity that we could not without great danger risk passing through it. So great was the agitation that the water was very muddy, and could not become clear.

Pekitanoui is a river of Considerable size, coming from the Northwest, from a great Distance; and it discharges into the Missisipi. There are many Villages of savages along this river, and I hope by its means to discover the vermillion or California sea.

Judging from The Direction of the course of the Missisipi, if it Continue the same way, we think that it discharges into the mexican gulf. It would be a great advantage to find the river Leading to the southern sea, toward California; and, As I have said, this is what I hope to do by means of the Pekitanoui, according to the reports made to me by the savages.

Continuing downstream, past picturesque Grand Tower and the mouth of the Ohio, they finally approached the Arkansas River and were entertained by several Indian tribes who told them of white men at the mouth of the Mississippi that spoke a language different from that of Joliet and Marquette. Realizing that the Spanish must be entrenched in this area and that imprisonment and possible death faced them, they determined to proceed no further.

Return from Mouth of the Arkansas River

Accordingly, on the 17th of July, they started north, finding that paddling against the current was very much more difficult than drifting down the river. To avoid the swifter currents, they had to criss-cross back and forth and follow shallow water, which was not dangerous because of the shallow draft of their feather-light canoes. The heat became very great and the mosquitoes were



Photo Courtesy Chicago Historical Society

Photograph of the bronze plaque on the Michigan Avenue Bridge in Chicago

nearly unbearable. To avoid the attention of Indians who might be hostile, they did not use campfires at night and often, instead of landing to sleep on a dry sand-bar, they took to sleeping in the canoes. These practices soon took a toll of the party's strength, particularly that of Marquette, who was not of a robust constitution.

At long last they reached the mouth of the Illinois River where they knew the Indians were friendly. There they learned that the trip home

could be shortened by turning right from the Mississippi and proceeding up the Illinois. It so happened that in a village they found the same Indians who had first received them in Iowa and



Michigan Historical Commission Photo

Site of original grave of Marquette at Ludington, Michigan

they were so well entertained that the weary explorers rested with the hospitable tribe for three days. Refreshed, they pushed on and, probably by way of the Chicago River, they finally came to Lake Michigan and the mission of St. Francois

Zavier at De Père. This was the end of September, just four months after the expedition started. Ill and exhausted, Marquette all but collapsed.

Death of Marquette

During the long and weary winter which followed, however, Marquette busied himself with plans to return to the village of the Illinois near Kaskaskia where he had promised to establish a mission. It was an entire year before his strength seemed to return and it was October before he started back from De Père, with two French servants for companions. The journey along the shore of Lake Michigan was cold and stormy and this constant exposure to rain, wind, and chill rapidly beat down Marquette's strength. Upon reaching the mouth of the Chicago River, he was compelled to halt and there, in a rude hut, he and his two servants spent the winter of 1674-1675. By March, Marquette felt strong enough to proceed and on the 8th of April, 1675, he finally reached the Indian village where he "was received as an angel from heaven." He arranged for a "tabernacle" and spoke eloquently to more than a thousand braves, who listened with "universal joy." But Marquette's health did not improve and, recognizing that his death was at hand, he determined to try to reach the mission of St. Ignace before he died. Through a cold and wet April and May, the two faithful servants pushed the canoe along the eastern shore of Lake Michigan with



Photo Courtesy Chicago Historical Society

THE DISCOVERERS

Relief on the northeast pylon of the Michigan Avenue Bridge (Chicago)

Scroll at base reads: "Joliet Father Marquette LaSalle and Tonti will live in American history as fearless explorers who made their way through the Great Lakes and across this watershed to the Mississippi in the late Seventeenth Century and typify the spirit of brave adventure which has always been firmly planted in the character of the Middle West . . . Presented to the City by William Wrigley Jr. 1928." Sculptor, James Earle Fraser

Marquette prone upon reed mats inside. At length, knowing his end had come, Marquette selected a high bluff and directed his servants to take him up there. The men protested, naturally, wishing to push on, but Marquette had his way. And there, on May 18, 1675, he died in a rude bark shelter, "with a countenance beaming and all aglow, he expired so gently that it might have been regarded as a pleasant sleep." The two servants carried out their orders and buried him on the hill with a large cross to mark the grave. In the spring, Indians carried the body to St. Ignace and it was interred in a small vault beneath the church. In 1700, the mission was burned and it was not until 1877 that Father Edward Jucker discovered the grave. Père Marquette's remains are now divided between the church of St. Ignace and Marquette University in Milwaukee.

Later Career of Joliet

Joliet, meanwhile, had spent the winter of 1673 at Mackinac, writing his report for the Governor of Canada, making his maps, and completing his journal of the voyage. He left in the spring on the long trip home but just as they approached the town of Montreal, their canoe was overturned in the riotous waters of the La Chine Rapids and Joliet's maps and journal were lost. His companions, including the Indian slave boy from Iowa, were all drowned and Joliet was rendered unconscious but some four hours later his body was

washed ashore by a capricious whirlpool and some fisherman chanced to see him and succeeded in restoring his breath.

At Quebec, probably his native town, Joliet was received with gay applause despite his loss. Bells



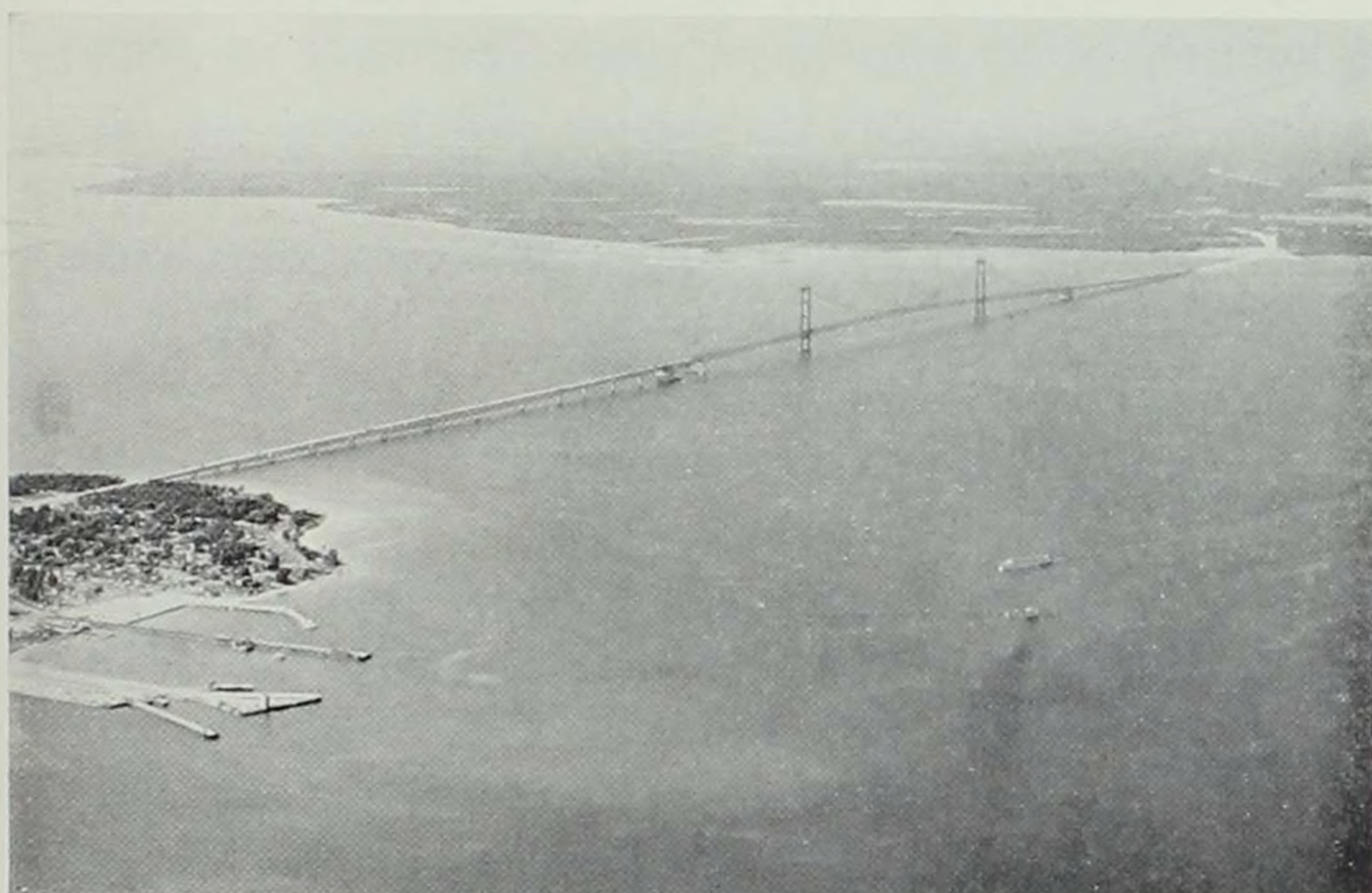
Photo Courtesy Chicago Historical Society

Illinois Indian — Jacques Marquette — Louis Joliet
Monument by Hermon Atkins McNeil, 24th Street and Marshall Boulevard,
unveiled in 1926

were rung and he was warmly welcomed — the only man to survive the expedition. To Governor Frontenac, he made a verbal report and later he wrote from memory a brief account of the trip and drew a map of the Great Lakes and the Mississippi showing how relatively simple was the

water route from New France to the Gulf of Mexico.

For years Joliet dreamed of the beautiful prairies he had seen and, contrasting that rich Iowa soil with the poor scratching of Quebec, he again and again proposed a farming settlement in that far-



New Bridge opened in 1958 across Straits of Mackinac to St. Ignace. It was along the north shore of Lake Michigan that Joliet and Marquette paddled on their way to discover Iowa.

away land. But it was too far away, then. In 1679, he was given the *seigneurie* of the Mingan Islands and later that year made a survey of the wild region between the Saguenay River and James Bay — where he found the British firmly seated. For this service, he was given Anticosti Island in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. There he and

his family prospered until 1690, when Sir William Phipps from Boston, leading a British attack on Quebec, destroyed Joliet's estate.

A few years later, the daring Frenchman explored Labrador and studied the Eskimos and the resources of that barbaric wilderness. A trip to France followed where he was received with high honors, being appointed royal professor of navigation. Back home in Quebec, he was given another *seigneurie*, lands to which he gave his own name and lands that are still possessed by his descendants. Louis Joliet died in 1700 — no one knows just where or how.

Together Joliet and Marquette performed a most valuable service for France. They made the first exploration of the Mississippi River, save for the Spanish in the south, and they gave to New France the strongest claim to the great interior of America. As for Iowa, they were probably the first white men to set foot on its soil; they gave the first account of its Indians; they made the first maps of its eastern shore. A century and a half passed before more than a few white men visited the 300 miles of Iowa between the Mississippi and Missouri, where Indians and buffalo continued to roam the rich grass-lands.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN